A snapshot of timely public health indicators.

## THIS ISSUE: SEASONAL INFLUENZA 2012/2013

Nationally, influenza is responsible for approximately 225,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year. While cases of influenza in Greene County have been

steadily declining since the 2009 H1N1 season (see Table 1), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is warning the public of a possible severe influenza season because reported flu cases are off to their earliest and most widespread start in nearly 10 years.

Influenza can cause disease

among people of any age, but rates of infection are highest in those between the ages of 5 and 49 (see Table 2).

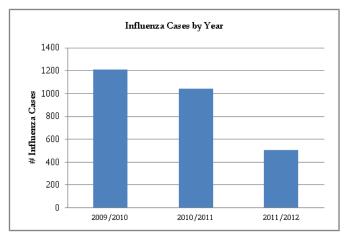


Table 1. Number of influenza cases for Greene County by year. Greene County is home to approximately 277,000 residents.

Those at highest risk for severe outcomes (hospitalization and/or death) associated with influenza are children less than 2 years of age, people over the age of 65, and individuals with an immune-suppressing condition.

The flu virus consists of two major subtypes, A and B. Multiple variations exist within each subtype. Typically, the predominant subtype of influenza circulating each year is type A (see Table 3). The influenza virus goes through frequent antigenic shifts, requiring a new vaccine to be manufactured each year. Identifying sub-

types and variations is important in order to correctly match yearly vaccines to the seasonal flu.

Since 2009, the majority of type A cases were H1N1.

So far this year, both influenza A and influenza B viruses have been identified. Proportionally, 77 percent of influenza cases have been identified as influenza A (H3N2) while 23 percent have been identified as influenza B (Wisconsin).

The vaccine for 2012-2013 (H1N1, H3N2, B Wisconsin)

appears to be a good match for circulating viruses at this time. In contrast, the vaccine for 2003/2004 was not a good match to the circulating subtypes and the fatality rate was 25 percent higher than normal.

Much of the illness and death associated with influenza can be avoided by obtaining an annual influenza vaccination. Despite a popular misconception, the influenza vaccine cannot cause a person to develop the flu itself. The vaccine is manufactured using an inert, or non-living, form of the virus. This form of the virus is such that when it is injected into the body, the immune system responds by producing protective antibodies. However, the virus is not viable enough to make someone sick.

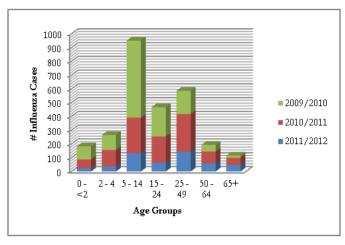


Table 2. Influenza cases by year in each age category.

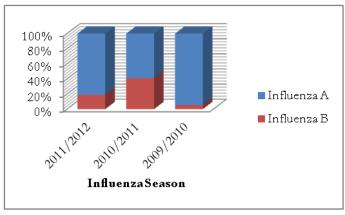


Table 3. Proportion of influenza subtypes A and B circulating each year.

More than a third of the U.S. population has been vaccinated against the flu, according to CDC estimates. The wide variety of places where people can now get flu vaccine and the lack of a centralized, mandated reporting system makes it difficult to estimate the local vaccinate rate. But community institutions are making great efforts to vaccinate employees, healthcare workers and students. Table 4 shows more than 38,000 vaccine doses have been distributed by seven organizations to date.

Organization	Approximate Number of Influenza Vaccinations Given
Cox Health	11,916
Greene County Flu Coalition	1,333
Jordan Valley Community Health Center	3,253
Mercy Hospital	10,300
Ozarks Community Hospital	655
Springfield-Greene County Health Department	1,683
Springfield Public Schools	9,597

Table 4. Influenza vaccine distributed to date for the 2012/2013 flu season by Springfield area partners.

## A New Approach to Fighting Flu

This season the Springfield Flu Immunization Coalition attempted an entirely new way of vaccinating a hard-to-reach population: "rolling" flu clinics. Using a large moble unit from Jordan Valley Community Health Center staffed by volunteer student nurses, the rolling clinic spent two days in October going up and down the densely packed commercial corridor of North Glenstone Avenue.

Shots were given to employees of restaurants, hotels and motels who otherwise wouldn't have had the time, money or transportation to get them. One woman featured in media coverage of the clinic was a fast food employee who lives at the Missouri Hotel. She said she otherwise wouldn't have been able to get a shot. She may not have even considered it at all. This was the first flu shot of her life.

The rolling clinic was somewhat small – about 210 doses in three outings – but the novelty of the project garnered public attention for flu shots, and it provided a great chance to vaccinate a highly at-risk population that has a lot of direct contact with the public.

Vaccine supply has been adequate to meet the consumer demands both nationally and locally. Individuals can do their part to protect not only themselves, but the community as a whole, from the flu by getting vaccinated.

If you fall into the category of: children ages 6 months to 18 years, pregnant women, or people who are in close contact with babies less than 6 months of age and live in Greene County, you can receive a flu vaccine at no charge by calling the Westside Public Health Center at (417) 874-1220 to schedule an appointment. People who are covered by insurance plans, including Medicare, should contact their health care provider or consider getting vaccinated at a retail location. The best option for adults without insurance is at retail locations. Use <a href="https://www.flu.gov">www.flu.gov</a> to find locations near you.

## Prevention Tips...

- It's never too late to get vaccinated. The body takes approximately 2 weeks to build sufficient immunity against influenza following vaccination. This means that if a person is exposed to flu within 2 weeks of getting their vaccination, they may still become ill although it should be a milder case of illness.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and then wash your hands with soap

- as soon as possible.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, without using fever-reducing medicine. Most healthy adults can infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than 7 days.

